

## **True Safety For Women ~ A Response To Fearful Messages**

Kidpower is an educational charitable organization that, since 1989, has brought "People Safety" education to over 1.2 million children, teenagers, and adults, including those with special needs, from many different cultures - close to home and around the world. For publications; free articles, podcasts and e-newsletter; and information about our services and locations, please visit [www.kidpower.org](http://www.kidpower.org).

Copyright © 2009 Irene van der Zande. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to print this PDF and copy this article for personal or free charitable use only as long as the Kidpower information and this copyright notice are clearly visible. For example, this means you can use this article as an educator in your classroom. However, prior written permission is required to reproduce this article in any other printed or digital form for any other purpose including on websites, in newsletters, or as part of a paid publication or service. Please contact [safety@kidpower.org](mailto:safety@kidpower.org).

In making decisions about how to create true safety in your life, we encourage you to keep the following points in mind:

- The Internet and other media are full of misleading or inaccurate messages about personal safety. Especially women are given a confusing combination of upsetting stories, a couple of good ideas, and some fear-based suggestions that are often so rigid that they are at best impractical and at worst dangerous.
- Personal security does not come from a list of measures or any specific self-defense techniques or weapons. Easy answers provide false reassurance instead of true safety.
- Being worried or afraid does not make you safer - it just makes you unhappy.
- Personal security comes from making a plan that includes realistic risk assessment of potential safety problems, tools for avoiding most trouble before it starts, skills for dealing with a dangerous situation, and knowing how to get help everywhere you go.
- You deserve to have joy and freedom in your life. True safety comes from inside yourself. Practicing what to do will help build your confidence and your skills.

The steps we recommend to both women and men in making decisions about how to protect your personal security are to:

1. **Make a Plan.** Only one or two minutes of thought a day can prepare you to keep yourself safe most of the time. Knowledge is power. Think about what the potential safety problems are in every place you go and learn how to prevent them. Know who to ask and how to persist in getting help. Do the simple things like locking your doors and putting a smoke detector in your home. Instead of worrying, practice what to do

so that you are prepared.

2. **Pay Attention.** Use your awareness to notice what is happening around you. That way you can avoid walking in front of cars, provoking animals, tripping over obstacles, getting caught in a snowstorm, or confronting difficult or dangerous people.

3. **Assess Realistically.** It's normal to wish that a potential problem will just disappear if you ignore it, but most safety problems don't go away by themselves. Judge people by their behavior rather than by their superficial appearance. Look at the environment, not just the problem. Think about what all of your choices are.

4. **Take Preventative Action.** Depending on the specific situation, you can leave rather than confronting someone, set clear boundaries to stop someone from bothering you, and advocate for the well-being of yourself and others. Be both powerful and respectful in whatever action you take.

5. **Get Away to Safety.** If you cannot just leave, know how to use both your voice and body forcefully to escape from a person or other danger. Just one strong move like yelling, pulling away, or hitting someone can stop most attacks long enough for you to get away and to get to safety.

6. **Get Help.** No problem is over until you are with people who can help you. People are sometimes distracted or don't want to get involved. Keep asking until you get the support you need. If one person doesn't listen, find another. Reporting a problem can also help protect others.